

Message Text

PAGE 01 SAIGON 04613 211211 Z

13

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 T-03

OMB-01 IO-12 AID-20 SR-02 ORM-03 RSR-01 /121 W

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R 210637 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8942

USDEL FRANCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4613

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: DAILY MR 3 SITREP 20 MARCH 73

THE FOLLOWING TELEGRAM WAS SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY SAIGON
DATED MARCH 20 REPEATED HERE FOR YOUR ACTION:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 0025

SUBJECT: DAILY MR3 SITREP - 20 MARCH 1973

1. THE FRENZIED PERIOD OF ORGANIZING THE DEMOCRACY PARTY AND
POPULAR FRONT HAS COME TO A GRINDING HALT IN THIS MILITARY REGION,
AS HAVE THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE HIGHLY HERALDED ORGANIZATIONS.
PROVINCE CHIEFS AND THEIR TRUSTED LIEUTENANTS ARE SITTING BACK
WAITING FOR WORD FROM SAIGON BEFORE TAKING THE NEXT STEP, WHATEVER
THAT MAY BE. SOURCES CLOSE TO THESE ORGANIZATIONS SEEM TO BE
SATISFIED THAT THE ORGANIZATIONS ARE IN GOOD SHAPE AND THE MEMBERS
THEREOF CAN BE TROTTED OUT WHENEVER THE NEED ARISES. POLITICAL
INDOCTRINATION GOES ON, HOWEVER, WITH OTHERS THAN THOSE DIRECTLY
ASSOCIATED WITH EITHER ORGANIZATION CARRYING THE BRUNT OF THE LOAD,
E. G. THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE COMMITTEES. THE RVN IS SHOWING INCREASING

CONFIDENCE THAT THEY CAN WIN A POLITICAL STRUGGLE WITH THE COMMUNISTS.

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 04613 211211 Z

2. SOME RVN OFFICIALS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE NOT OVERLY CONCERNED AT
REPORTS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF COMMUNIST CIVILIANS BEING BROUGHT INTO
MR3 FROM CAMBODIA OR FROM THE NORTH. THE RVN WILL PREVENT THE

NEW ARRIVALS FROM VOTING IN ELECTIONS BY DEMANDING PROOF OF PRIOR

RESIDENCE, WHICH THE RVN WILL CHECK AGAINST ITS POLICE RECORD, PLANTATION PAY RECORDS, ETC. RESIDENT VC WOULD BE ALLOWED TO VOTE, THEY SAY, BUT NOT NVA TROOPS OR THEIR DEPENDENTS OR VIETNAMESE FROM CAMBODIA.

3. ICCS SOURCES HERE ARE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE APPROACHING CHANGEOVER

FROM FPJMC TO TPJMC. ONE HIGH- RANKING SOURCE SAYS IT WILL BE A CHANGE-

OVER FROM A " PARTIALLY FUNCTIONING FPJMC TO A NON- FUNCTIONING TPJMC." HE DID NOT WANT TO SPECULATE ON THE CONSEQUENCES, BUT WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT VERY HOPEFUL. HE CITED AS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE PROBLEMS AHEAD THE FACT THAT THE FPJMC HAS NOT DELINEATED CORRIDORS FOR MOVEMENT OF TROOPS BY BOTH BELLIGERENTS AS CALLED FOR IN THE PARIS AGREEMENT, AND THE AGREEMENT DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR THE TPJMC TO DO SO. HE THEREFORE FEELS THAT IF THE PRG WANTS TO CONTINUE TO DRAG ITS FEET, IT WILL HAVE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO DO SO AFTER X PLUS 60. (COMMENT: IN ORDER TO RESPOND TO THIS LINE OF THINKING, WE WOULD

APPRECIATE THE EMBASSY' S INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE 3(S) OF THE PROTOCOL CONCERNING THE CEASE- FIRE IN SOUTH VIET- NAM AND THE JOINT MILITARY COMMISSIONS. COULD NOT THAT ARTICLE BE APPLIED TO THE TPJMC AS WELL AS TO THE FPJMC?)

4. PHUOC LONG PROVINCE IS UNDER INCREASING NVA/ VC PRESSURE. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, THERE HAVE BEEN APPROXIMATELY FOUR NVA/ VC SHELLINGS PER DAY, INCLUDING ONE WHICH CAME MUCH TOO CLOSE TO THE VISITING U. S. INTERPROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVE NEAR THE PHUOC BINH AIRSTRIP. OTHER TARGETS HAVE BEEN THE 97 TH RANGER BATTALION COMMAND POST AND PHUOC BINH DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS. AT 2030 17 MARCH, AN ESTIMATED COMPANY- SIZE COMMUNIST UNIT ATTACKED THE 97 TH RANGERS NEAR SON HA NORTHWEST OF SONG BE, LOSING 15 KIA AND INFLECTING 1 KIA, 8 WIA, AND THE LOSS OF ONE M-160. FARMERS AND WOODCUTTERS ARE REPORTING LARGE NUMBERS OF NVA/ VC IN THE FORESTS IN THE SONG BE AREA, MAKING VAGUE THREATS THAT THEY WILL " FLATTEN EVERYTHING" IN THE AREA.

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 04613 211211 Z

5. THE NVA/ VC HAVE ALWAYS USED PHUOC LONG MAINLY AS A CORRIDOR AND REAR SERVICE AREA. THEIR MILITARY ACTIVITY AND THREATS MAY BE A REACTION TO THE PROVINCE GOVERNMENT' S ENERGETIC EFFORTS TO REPOPULATE AND SUPPLY THE PROVINCE. DURING THE PAST WEEK, MOST OF THE ETHNIC VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM LONG DIEN HAMLET, ABOUT 400 PEOPLE, HAVE RETURNED HOME FROM AN LOI REFUGEE CAMP IN BIEN HOA. SOME 30 FAMILIES WITH 170 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BUSED UP FROM PHU VAN REFUGEE CAMP IN BINH DUONG, AND ARE WAITING AT A HIGHSCHOOL IN SONG BE UNTIL PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT ACCOMMODATIONS CAN BE ESTABLISHED FOR THEM. SEVERAL BATTALIONS FROM THE 7 TH REGIMENT OF THE ARVN

5 TH DIVISION HAVE KEPT ROUTES 1 A AND 14 FREE FROM NVA/ VC CHECKPOINTS, AND ARVN ENGINEERS AND THE LOCAL PROVINCE PUBLIC WORKS HAVE BEEN REPAIRING KEY BRIDGES. THEY EXPECT BY APRIL 15 TO PUT THE PROVINCE'S PRINCIPAL ROADS--1 A FROM THE BINH DUONG BORDER TO DONG XOAI, 14 NLFROM BONG XOAI THROUGH BUNARD AND DUC PHONG TO THE QUANG DUC BORDER, AND 311 BETWEEN SONG BE AND 14-- BACK INTO GOOD SHAPE.

6. ARVN III CORPS REPORTED THAT VC/ NVA ACTIVITY CONTINUED AT A MODERATE LEVEL IN THE PRECEDING 24 HOUR PERIOD. 8 GROUND ENGAGEMENTS, 1 OF THESE SIGNIFICANT, AND 18 ATTACKS BY FIRE, 7 OF WHICH EXCEEDED 20 ROUNDS, WERE REPORTED AS COMMUNIST INITIATED. THE 114 TH RF COMPANY OPERATING 10 KM NORTHEAST OF DONG XOAI IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE TOOK 2 ABFS CONSISTING OF 46 ROUNDS OF MIXED MORTAR AND B-40 GERNADES. THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES IN EITHER ATTACK. THE 275 TH RF COMPANY CONDUCTING SECURITY OPERATIONS 5 KM SOUTH OF AN LOC RECEIVED 20 ROUNDS OF 60 MM MORTAR FOLLOWED BY A GROUND PROBE BY AN UNKNOWN SIZE COMMUNIST FORCE. 3 RF WERE WOUNDED, VC LOSSES UNKNOWN. THE SITUATION AT THE TONLE CHAM BASE CAMP ON THE SAIGON RIVER IN TAY NINH PROVINCE IS NOW CRITICAL. THE CAMP IS SHELLED DAILY AND GROUND PROBES CONTINUE. SINCE 12 MARCH THE BASE HAS RECEIVED 19 ABFS AND 5 GROUND ATTACKS TOTALING OVER 800 INCOMING ROUNDS. III CORPS COMMANDER LTG NGUYEN VAN MINH ORDERED HEAVY TACAIR STRIKES TO RELIEVE PRESSURE ON THE BASE. OVER 80 SUCH STRIKES WERE FLOWN 19 MARCH. DAILY CASUALTY FIGURES WERE 18 COMMUNISTS KILLED, 3 FRIENDLY KILLED AND 18 WOUNDED. 1 VIETNAMESE CIVILIAN WAS WOUNDED BY MORTAR FRAGMENTS NORTH OF BEN CAT.

7. LATE REPORTS FROM TONLE CHAM INDICATE THAT THE SITUATION THERE HAS WORSENERED. THE AMMO DUMP THERE HAS BEEN BLOWN UP BY INCOMING ROUNDS AND THE GARRISON IS NOW VERY LOW ON AMMO. CHOPPERS CANNOT GET IN WITH AMMO AND OTHER RESUPPLY NOR TO EVACUATE SOME 40 WOUNDED DUE

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PAGE 04 SAIGON 04613 211211 Z

TO INTENSE GROUND FIRE. WALKINSHAW
UNQUOTE
BUKNKER

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